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ABSTRACT

Discourse strategies used by status-unequal interlocutors expressing disagreement are discussed. The paper focuses on the influence of role relationships on semantic formulas. A comparative study of discourse strategies used by native speakers of Turkish and North American English in the same speech event is also reported. Data were gathered from 80 native Turkish-speakers and 14 native English-speakers in a written elicitation task, supplemented by observation. Each subject was presented with two status-unequal situations in a work context, one in which a higher-status individual disagrees with the idea of a lower-status individual, and one in which a lower-status individual disagrees with the idea of a higher-status individual. Frequency and type of semantic formulas (criticism, suggestion, use of positive statement to preface disagreement, expression of gratitude, expression of empathy, postponement of decision) and politeness strategies (positive preface, softeners, questions, mitigating devices, address terms) used in response to each situation were analyzed. Patterns of similarity and difference found across language groups and across situations are examined. Contains 24 references. (MSE)

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DISCOURSE OF POWER AND POLITENESS:

THROUGH THE ACT OF DISAGREEMENT

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Abstract

This paper discusses the discourse strategies status unequal interlocutors use in expressing disagreement. It reveals semantic formulas as influenced by the role relationships, thus relative power and status of interlocutors. It also compares and contrasts the discourse strategies used by native speakers of Turkish and American English in the same speech event to obtain a cross-cultural perspective. Data was collected from 80 native speakers of Turkish and 14 native speakers of American English using a written elicitation task (Beebe and Takahashi 1993) and supplemented by natural observations. Analysis was done by uncovering the semantic strategies and politeness formulas status unequal interlocutors use in carrying out this face-threatening speech function. Findings indicate style variation in accordance with role relationships and reveal the sociolinguistic norms of different discourse communities in the execution of the same speech act

Introduction

Research on speech acts have flourished in the field of applied linguistics and pragmatics within the last decade. The study of speech acts as functional units in communication and the investigation of sociocultural contexts under which their use is essential are important for various reasons. By disclosing both the 'rules of speaking' (Wolfson 1989) and the values of a society, they assist applied linguists in developing socioculturally acceptable and grammatically appropriate classroom material for the language teachers. Furthermore, an in-depth look at the native speakers' communicative competence will help not only the applied linguists to understand more the important, yet usually covert aspects of communication that are different from language structure, but also provide clues for improved cross-cultural communication.

Empirical studies on speech acts have indicated that native speaker intuitions about the actual use of language are inaccurate. In other words, native speakers' opinions or judgements about speech behavior are mirror images of community norms or attitudes, which have little to do with the actual use of the person who applies them (Wolfson 1989:40).

The findings of the studies on speech acts have further shown that stereotyping or stigmatizing certain cultures/subcultures based on intuition was incorrect. For instance, cross-cultural studies on Japanese and Americans (Beebe and Takahashi 1989a b, Takahashi and Beebe 1993) on various speech acts (correction, disagreement, giving embarrassing information and chastisement) showed that in comparison to the Japanese, Americans were more indirect and more polite. This questions the common belief that Americans are more direct and explicit than Japanese. Actually, Americans use more positive remarks, thus they soften their speech acts with a statement which is completely opposite of what they mean to say i.e. 'token agreement' (Brown and Levinson 1978). Beebe and Takahashi's findings also indicate that the general opinion that the Japanese refrain from disagreeing or making critical remarks in order not to threaten the face of the

addressee is questionable as well. Thus, contrary to common beliefs, these studies showed that the Japanese were not so indirect.

Numerous studies on speech acts exist yet they are not compatible with the number of cultures in the world. More cross-cultural investigations are needed to provide insights for improved intercultural communication in a world rapidly turning into a global village. More solid evidence about the actual use of language in different cultures is essential if we want to refrain from making generalizations about the actual use of language and avoid stereotyping. Though speech act studies have been accumulating recently, they still focus on the English language and its use, hence failing to reveal the complexity of language use across cultures and across languages. It is not our intention here to give a resume of research done so far. Such a task could not be accomplished in the course of a paper (interested readers are referred to Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993; Wolfson 1989; Cohen 1996). Our intention is to contribute to the above mentioned speech act data from the perspective of a language not yet examined in this respect, Turkish, and to give a cross-culturally comparative analysis. Raising awareness about cross-cultural differences or similarities will inhibit 'pragmatic failure' (Thomas 1983) such that speakers will not only be grammatically target-like but also appropriate to the norms of the target culture.

The Turkish language presents a case on which, to the best of our knowledge, there seems to be few published reports in the field of applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, with the exception of Doğançay-Aktuna and Kamışlı (1996). Forthcoming studies on Turkish seem to be limited to the structural and phonological aspects of the language, thus focusing on linguistics. In the domain of sociolinguistics, a few examples are Dundes, Leech and Özkök's (1972) work on Turkish boys verbal duels, Tannen and Öztek's (1981) work on comparing Turkish and Greek formulaic expressions, further supported by Doğançay's (1990) work on proverbs and formulaic utterances in Turkish, all of which provide information on Turkish societal values and norms. In recent years, one can name Özçalışkan's

(1994) work on gender differences in swearing, Subasi-Uzun's (1996) study of gender differences in interpreting texts and König's (1990) and later Balpinar's (1996) analysis of *sen/ siz* (familar/formal second person pronoun (cf. tu vs. vous in French) as examples of sociolinguistic work.

In order to contribute to this field, we conducted a study on the speech act use of native speakers of Turkish, and analyzed Turkish subjects' written responses to various speech acts (correction, disagreement, chastisement, praise, persuasion, and announcing embarrassing information). In this paper we will focus on disagreements from a cross-culturally comparative perspective and compare and contrast speech act data from two speech communities; Turkish and American English groups. Findings are hoped to form the starting point for revealing the sociolinguistic norms of different groups in the same context, especially those of Turkish native speakers. Semantic and syntactic formulas emerging from such analyses can be utilized in teaching foreign languages for performing effectively in academic settings or workplaces, and for raising people's awareness of Turkish cultural norms on appropriacy required in encounters among people of unequal status.

In sum, we set out to answer the following questions: a) how do native speakers of Turkish differ from native speakers of American English in displaying disagreement. b) what type of politeness strategies, if any, are employed by these two groups to soften the impact of this inherently face-threatening act? In general, our aim was to examine the relative impact of social power on the execution of the same speech function in different speech communities and to uncover possible cross-cultural variation, while expanding the scope of sociolinguistic work on Turkish.

Method

Eighty Turkish subjects, 28 males and 42 females, age range of 19-22 participated in this study. They were all first year students coming from two large universities located in different areas of the country. They were all native speakers

of Turkish from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and from different regions of the country, as ascertained by the background survey we carried out. In other words, they were true representatives of young educated Turkish people from all parts of Turkey. Those students who had had significant exposure to other cultures and languages (defined here as more than one year) were eliminated from the study as they could have been influenced by other sociocultural norms besides Turkish.

Fourteen American adults, 4 males and 10 females, provided data on American English norms using the same procedure. The Americans all had university education currenlty working in various positions. Similar to the Turkish subjects, they did not have living experiences outside of the United States.

Subjects were given a discourse completion test (DCT) following the tradition of many speech act research, and asked to role play the given situation and then write down exactly what they would say in that particular situation. The DCT contained two situations for the speech act investigated, one from a higher status to a lower status person and one from a lower status to a higher status one. We have adapted Takahashi and Beebe's discourse completion test (1993) which contained cross-culturally valid situations. In other words, the situations were not specific to the American culture, but consisted of situations which any person from any culture could run into in their everyday lives. For the Turkish subjects, the situations were translated into Turkish by the researchers and an independent Turkish-English balanced bilingual. In addition, they were validated by two professors who specialized in Turkish and English comparative linguistics. As a part of a larger research project, subjects responded to the following two situations i.e., writing what they would say while playing the role of the higher status person as well as lower status person. The situations were:

Situation 1 (Higher to Lower)

"You are a corporate executive. Your assistant submits a proposal for reassignment of secretarial duties in your division. Your assistant describes the benefits of this new plan, but you believe it will not work."

You:

Situation 2 (Lower to Higher)

"You work in a corporation. Your boss presents you with a plan for reorganization of the department that you are convinced will not work. Your boss says: 'Isn't this a great plan?'"

You:

The DCT was supplemented by observations done in settings other than the workplace where researchers made notes of situations which called for a disagreement by status unequals. This was done to cross-validate the DCT findings.

Data Analysis

All the subjects' responses were analyzed as having a sequence of semantic formulas or minimal units of meaning such as a disagreement (*"Bu planın işe yaracağını sanmıyorum./I don't think this plan will work")* and a rationale (*"çünkü ... /because ..."*). Also, they were classified based on their syntactic structure (e.g., statement, question). The total number of semantic and syntactic formulas for both of the disagreement situations was obtained. Using Beebe and Takahashi's politeness categories ('positive remarks' or 'positive adjuncts', 'softeners', 'questions' and 'mitigating devices', to be defined later in the article), the softening devices in the subjects' responses were analyzed and tabulated. Since the natural data did not allow for statistical analysis, the findings are presented descriptively. The goal is to reflect the content of the responses within a cross-cultural framework. Subjects' responses where they described what they would do instead of what they would say were disqualified and were not taken into consideration in the analysis.

Disagreement Formulas in Turkish and American English

In this section we will first discuss the sociolinguistic behavior of native speakers of Turkish by looking at their preferred semantic strategies for expressing disagreement to status unequals. Then we will compare and contrast these with that of native speakers of American English, hence giving our findings to the first research question.

The analysis of Turkish subjects' responses revealed several interesting findings with respect to the frequency and the type of semantic and syntactic formulas generated by the higher and lower status groups. While disagreeing with an interlocutor of an unequal status, the total number of semantic and syntactic formulas that the Turkish subjects used were close. The same strategies were used quite uniformly by the two groups, regardless of status, especially in criticism, suggestion and positive preface. The only difference was the use of token agreement by the lower status Turks. Tables 1 and 2 present the strategies under discussion (see page 9).

Criticism was found in the way in which people of both status disagreed explicitly (H: 71%, L: 69%). In case of both status levels, the Turkish subjects felt it was necessary to verbalize what they thought was wrong with the plan, which might be an appropriate i.e., accepted and expected verbal behavior in the workplace. Both the higher and the lower status Turks were direct and blunt while stating their disapproval of the plan. The explicitness of the lower status response *"I don't think this plan would work"* was very similar to that of the higher status response *"This plan won't work."*

Explicit criticisms were also followed by a rationale and interestingly this strategy was applied equally by both status groups (40%). Almost half of the responses given by both groups came with a reason. These responses contained explanations as what exactly was wrong with the plan (*"Bence bu plan işe yaramaz, çünkü orijinal değil../I think this plan won't work, because it is not original".*).

Table 1. Frequency of use of major semantic formulas in the Disagreement Situation 1 (higher to lower status)

	Turks (n=80)	Americans (n=14)
Criticism	71%	64%
Suggestion	38%	71%
Positive statement	23%	64%
Gratitude	9%	36%
Empathy	3%	-
Postponement of decision	4%	-
Disqualified	8%	-
Total number of formulas used	148%	235%

Table 2. Frequency of use of major semantic formulas in the Disagreement Situation 2 (lower to higher status)

	Turks (n=80)	Americans (n=14)
Criticism	69%	43%
Suggestion	31%	86%
Positive statement	28%	50%
Token agreement	21%	21%
Refraining from express opinion	5%	-
Acceptance	1%	-
Disqualified	5%	7%
Total number of formulas used	155%	200%

All percentages are rounded off to the nearest ten.

Lower status persons also said: *"Efendim, bence bu planda şu şu aksaklıklar var. Bu eksiklikler başarıyı önleyebilir /Sir, I think this plan has got (these) weaknesses. These weaknesses might lead to failure,"* and *"Bu konuda tereddütlerim var, ... yüzünden bu düzenleme planının başarılı olamayacağı kaygısını taşıyorum./I have reservations about this issue, because of ... I am concerned that this plan may not work."*

However, both the higher status and the lower status persons were careful about not hurting the face needs of the hearer while disagreeing. In other words, prefacing the disagreement with a positive statement was an important strategy used by people to save the face of the other party. The softened disagreement formulas consisted of a praise either to the effort spent on the plan or the plan itself which was followed by announcing that the plan would not work. The higher status persons prefaced their disagreement almost as often as the lower status person (23% vs. 28%). The higher status person said: *"Planın üzerinde iyi çalışmışsın, fakat daha iyi şeyler yapabilirdin./You worked on this plan, but you could have done better."* The lower status person, on the other hand, stated: *"Güzel bir plan ama eksikleri var./It is a good plan, but some points are missing."*

Suggestion was another semantic formula which was closely employed by status groups (H:38% vs. L:31%). Both groups used this strategy for various purposes: looking for another solution (or plan), trying the plan, and reconsidering the plan. People in the higher status felt freer when making suggestions to move on to a new plan since they have the authority to do so. (*"... ama bence şirketimiz için çok daha faydalı başka planı bir gün içersinde bana yeniden sunabilirsiniz./ ... but I think you can hand in another, more useful plan within the day."* or *"...başka bir plan düşünmeliyiz./We need to think of another plan."*) The other suggestions were equally applied by both parties. Both the higher and the lower status people suggested to try the plan and see how it works (*"Bence bu plan işe yaramaz fakat bir defa deneyelim./I think this plan won't work, but let's try it once"* or *"Kanımca bu önerin işe yaramaz, fakat tatmin olman için deneyelim./In my opinion, this plan*

won't work, but we will try it just for you to see."). Both parties' suggestions as reconsideration in the future occured either with a specific date (*"Yarın sizinle bir daha inceleyelim./Let's go over it tommorrow again."* or *"Akşama bir daha gözden geçirelim./Let's go over them tonight."*) or without a specific date (*"Sanırım üzerinde bir daha düşünsen daha iyi olur./I think it will be better if you think on it more,"* or *"Şunları da katıp planı öyle gözden geçirsek daha iyi olmaz mı sizce?"/What if we think consider ... points, don't you think it will be better?"*). Turks' suggestions for reconsideration without a specific date sounded as if they aimad putting the plan off. That is, the tone indicated avoidance for disagreement.

Further similarity between the two status groups appeared in the way their suggestions were formulated; questioning was a strategy commonly used both by the higher status and the lower status people. An example of a question from higher status was: *"Neden şöyle yapmıyoruz? / Why don't we do X?"* and a lower status was *"Olabilir, ama şurayı-şurayı değiştirsek daha iyi olmaz mı?/Possible, but wouldn't it be better if we changed this and that?"*. This syntactic formula which was employed by both parties can be thought of as a part of dynamics at work place. Turks in the lower status are expected to find an alternative course of action in case of disagreement. It might be considered as part of their responsibility or within their job description to provide an alternative or a suggestion to their boss while disagreeing. It may very well be within the boss' expectations to have their ideas challenged in turn. By asking factual questions, the lower status Turks get the higher status ones to see the flaws in the plan without giving straight disagreements in a statement. In turn, the higher status persons are expected to lead or direct the lower status persons in finding the most appropriate solution to the problem at hand. Their role is that of a mentor's.

The status difference in the Turkish group, however, played an important role in the formulation of new strategies of disagreement. There were some strategies that were particular only to that status. When playing the role of the higher status, the Turkish subjects employed three different strategies: gratitude

(*"Uğraştığın için teşekkürler./ Thanks for spending time on it."* or *"Öneriniz için teşekkür ederim. / Thank you for yor proposal."*), empathy (*"Sizin fikirlerinize saygım var./I respect your ideas."* or *"Söylediklerinizi anlıyorum./I understand what you are saying."*), and postponement of decision (*"işlerimin yoğun olmadığı bir zamanda üzerinde düşünüp fikrimi sonra belirteceğim./I will think about it when I have time and tell you my opinions."* or *"Şu anda bir karara varmak doğru olmaz./It is not time to make decisions now."*)

In case of the lower status, the Turkish subjects developed three different kinds of strategies. Token agreements was one strategy, which was quite frequently applied by the lower status (21%). That is, while the lower status person said *"yes"* or agreed with the higher status person that the plan was great, he or she said (*"Evet öyle görünüyor ama .../Yes, it looks good but ..."/"Evet, iyi bir plan ama ..."/"Yes, it is a good plan but ..."*). The other two strategies particular to only lower status Turks were agreeing with the boss (*"Öyle sanırım./I think so."*) and refraining from expressing opinion. The latter formula appeared in two syntactic categories: a) statement: *"Şöyle böyle./ So so."* and *"Bilmiyorum, belki./I don't now, maybe,"* and b) question: *"Üzerinden bir geçebilir miyiz?/Can we go over them?"* and *"Bilmiyorum efendim. Bir kez daha düşünsek nasıl olur?/I don't know, sir. What if we think about it again?"*

In sum, the dynamics at the workplace in Turkish culture seems to trigger quite uniform behavior regardless of status. There seems to be some hierarchy which can be explained in terms of formulation of new semantic categories, yet this hierarchy is not rigid, but flexible. This finding seems to contradict the stereotypical image of the patriarchical Turkish society where seniority carries a lot of weight. Disagreements are expected and accepted as long as they lead to productivity. Turks prefer to be bald and give criticisms of another's idea in most cases. Yet, they can also offer suggestions for a change or reconsideration, while using positive remarks to preface their disagreements.

The comparison of the Turkish and American disagreements at the workplace revealed important cultural differences. Status difference which proved not to be a determining factor on the interaction at the Turkish workplace came out to be a more important factor in American settings. Similar to Turks, Americans both in the higher and lower status applied the same type of formulas, but with distinctly different frequencies.

Americans both playing the higher and lower status position developed the same strategies to disagree with the other party. When playing the role of the higher status, the American subjects (64%) disagreed more explicitly than they did in the lower status position (43%). Most of the Americans in the higher status gave explicit criticisms (*"I'd be willing to talk about this more, but as of now I think there are some problems with the proposal."*) whereas fewer number of lower status Americans (43%) disagreed explicitly (*"I have some misgivings about this. Could I mention them, please?"*). Only two of the American responses came with a rationale which did not specify what the problem was and those were from higher status Americans (*"In my experience, X, Y, and Z have been problems."*). Recall that in most Turks the provision of a rationale was quite common.

Americans in general were much more careful than the Turks in redressing their disagreements with initial positive statements. 64% of higher status and 50% of lower status Americans included a positive remark alongside their disagreement/criticism. Americans playing the role of the higher status were conscious about saving the face of the other (*"I like your suggestions, but in my experience X, Y and Z have been problems."*). On the other hand, 50% of lower status Americans disguised their disagreement (*"It does sound great. I like the ideas about X and Y, but no plan is perfect"*). The subjects in the higher status perhaps felt that threatening or hurting the face of the other might discourage the employees to be creative and productive at their work, which contradicts with what really boss wants. For the boss, achievement and success are important, which perhaps result from self-confidence and team work at the workplace. Among the Turks, however,

the status difference did not generate that much difference in the frequency of the use of this strategy, thus showing that the dynamics of workplace can show cross-cultural differences.

The Americans differed from the Turks with respect to the suggestion category i.e. they employed this strategy much more than Turks. However, status played a difference in the use of this strategy among the Americans. More Americans in the lower status (86%) made suggestions *"It sounds good. But I think there might be a problem with... Maybe... would work better."* than the higher status (71%) *"This has some merit, but I don't think, as it is, it will work. Why don't you try these changes?"* Both the higher and the lower status Americans used suggestion for reconsideration of the proposal at a specific date *"I would like some time to consider your ideas. Can we discuss it tomorrow at 2.00? "* and with no specific date *"Study this plan or any others that you come up with in the future"*. The latter was used more by lower status. Suggestion for another solution was used two times, but only by the lower status. Suggestions mostly appeared in statement forms and as Y/N questions. There were three questions posed by the higher status Americans and one question by the lower status(*"... but don't you think that this would work a little better?"*).

Four times as many higher status Americans (36%) than Turks (9%) chose gratitude as a strategy to preface their disagreement with the lower status *"Thank you for your interest and your efforts"* The lower status Americans, however, used token agreements (21%) as a strategy to disagree with the other party *"Yes, it is. It's a very good plan, but ..."* as frequently as the lower status Turks (21%). In other words, gratitude was not a strategy preferred by higher status Turks, while token agreements were used with equal frequency by both lower status Turks and lower status Americans.

The disagreement formulas analyzed within a cross-cultural frame seem to indicate that there are cross-culturally valid formulas that are applicable in the Turkish and American culture, while certain formulas seem exclusive or specific to

each culture. The cultural difference becomes apparent in frequency of use of these formulas at the workplace of each culture. Status difference appears more prominent in the American culture than the Turkish culture. Americans prefer to give criticisms as well as suggestions to the lower status interocutor while higher status Turks mainly offer direct criticisms. Lower status Americans offer twice as many suggestions than criticism to higher status hearer while the exact opposite is true of the Turks. In general, making suggestions to remedy a plan seems to be an American trait. Moreover, Americans thank their employees more for their efforts even when they do not approve of the product. Turks, on the other hand, at least in the workplace, do not express much gratitude for work done. This might be related to Turks seeing job-related efforts as part of one's responsibility; not an extra attempt. More research is needed to uncover the underlying cultural norms making people behave in the manner they do.

Power and Politeness in Turkish and American English

The study of culturally conditioned face-threatening and non-face threatening speech acts is of significant importance from a linguistic and pragmatic/cultural perspective since both may lead to miscommunication, resulting in irreparable situations. However, study of face-threatening acts seems to be more essential and important because not knowing how to respond in those situations or responding in the culturally unacceptable or inappropriate way can cause serious offenses, thus irrecoverable or irreplaceable breakdowns in communication. Violating the rules of speaking one can easily offend the interlocutor, and consequently, cannot reverse the action.

The applied linguists can provide solid evidence of invaluable importance to the language teacher and intercultural communicator by examining the semantic and syntactic formulas applied in such speech acts. However, they should also provide information about the softening devices which are wisely used in those speech acts since they have the potential to make the speech behaviour less threatening.

Some cross-cultural studies focused on the politeness formulas used by different cultures. These studies (Cohen and Olshtain 1981, Beebe and Takahashi 1989a, b, Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz 1990 and Takahashi and Beebe 1993) reveal several semantic formulas that would soften the upcoming face-threatening speech act, thus enabling a smoother flow of communication. Positive remarks *"I wish I could, (but), ..."* praise and compliments *"It's very nice, (but), ..."* and positive evaluations *"You have done a good job on this, (but), ..."* are examples of such formulas. These reserchers also showed that politeness devices also occur with variations across cultures. The rest of this study examines the politeness formulas employed by native speakers of Turkish and native speakers of American English to find out how people of different cultures soften the impact of their disagreements in accordance with their social positions.

Our analysis led to the emergence of the following general categories of politeness markers, which were also used by Takahashi and Beebe (1993) for analyzing American English and Japanese ESL sociolinguistic data (Japanese learners of English as a second language). The following categories are used to classify the politeness devices:

a) positive prefaces: positive remarks praising the plan, which is followed by a criticism functioning as a disagreement as in *"It is a good plan, but ..."*

b) softeners: expressions (or hedges) such as *"I believe/think this plan won't work." "Perhaps we will try in the future."*

c) questions as devices for lessening the assertion: *"Can we go over the plan?"*

d) mitigating devices: other expressions intended to lighten the gravity of the interlocutor's mistake or to defend the interlocutor, e.g., *"My opinion is a bit different."*

Except for very few instances, we found that politeness formulas employed by the Turkish subjects easily fell into the categories that were devised by the aforementioned researchers, proving their applicability for the cultures under

comparison. Tables 3 and 4 present our findings (see page 18). In our discussion, again, we will first focus on the politeness norms of the Turks, then compare these with those of Americans.

The status difference was not very apparent with respect to the frequency of politeness formulas that are employed by the Turkish subjects. The number of politeness formulas higher and lower status groups used were close. However, the higher status Turks thought it was appropriate to state their criticism outright more without using politeness markers to soften or lessen the impact of direct disagreement (30% vs. 20%). The higher status Turkish subjects were more direct when disagreeing with the lower status person. *"Bu plan işe yaramaz./This plan won't work."* or *"Bu plan denemeye değmez. işe yarayacağını sanmıyorum./This plan is not worth trying. I don't believe it will work."*

Status difference played a slightly more important role in prefacing the disagreements. The nigher status Turks felt that they do not need to preface or soften their disagreements as much as the lower status (20% vs. 30%), though the use of politeness remarks was not that high in either group. *"Tasarıların çok güzel epeyde emek harcamışsın, fakat henüz bu planın işe yarayacağını sanmıyorum./Your suggestions are very good and you gave them a lot of thought, but I don't think this plan would work yet"*, and *"Planın üzerinde iyi çalışmışsın, fakat daha iyi şeyler yapabilirdin./You worked on this plan well, but you could have done better."*

The higher status person prefered to use softeners (25%) slightly more than positive prefaces (20%). However, the use of softeners by the higher status was not very noticeably more than the lower status (25% vs. 19%). Perhaps Turks in the higher status person felt that they need to save the lower status persons' face. It is very likely that they did not want to be discouraging to their employees, i.e., they exhibited a positive attitude to suggestions coming from the lower status. However, they wanted to be mentors, but did not want to be misleading at the same time. So instead of using positive prefaces where usually a praise to the plan is followed by a criticism, they employed a toned down politeness strategy which is 'softeners'.

Table 3. Frequency of use of politeness strategies in the Disagreement Situation 1 (higher to lower status)

	Turks (n=80)	Americans (n=14)
Positive preface	20%	71%
Softeners	25%	36%
Questions	9%	-
Mitigating devices	4%	7%
Address Terms	1%	-
No formula	30%	-
Other	11%	14%
Disqualified	6%	7%
Total number of formulas used	69%	128%

Table 4. Frequency of use of politeness strategies in the Disagreement Situation 2 (lower to higher status)

	Turks (n=80)	Americans (n=14)
Positive preface	30%	57%
Softeners	19%	21%
Questions	15%	14%
Mitigating devices	1%	21%
Address Terms	16%	-
No formula	20%	-
Other	14%	7%
Disqualified	2%	7%
Total number of formulas used	79%	120%

All figures are rounded off to the nearest ten.

(*"Sanırım pek işe yaramayacak ama yine de bir fırsat veriyorum denemen için./I think this plan won't work, but I am giving you a chance to try it"* and *"Bu şekilde olursa istediğimiz sonuca ulaşamayız, belki üzerinde biraz daha çalışmamız gerekebilir./If we take it as it is, we cannot achieve anything. We need to work on it more."*).

There was a slight difference in the use of questions as a politeness strategy. Questioning strategy was less used by the higher status person (9% vs. 15%). To save face the higher status person asked wh- (*"Bu öneriyi biraz daha ileri zamanda uygulamaya koysak ne dersin?/What do you think of using this suggestion in the future?"*) and confirmation questions. (*"Gerçekten bu öneriniz çok yararlı olabilir ama bence şirketimiz için çok daha faydalı başka bir planınızı gün içerisinde bana yeniden sunabilirsiniz. Yanılıyor muyum?/Your proposal might be very helpful, but I think you could bring another which will be more helpful for our company. Am I right?"*)

The Turks in the lower status, on the other hand, posed more questions (15%) in the form of yes/no and wh- questions. However, the rate of yes/no questions were greater than the wh- questions (6 vs. 2). Among the confirmation questions, negative confirmation was more in number (6 vs. 3). A possible explanation for this is that the lower status Turks point out their disagreement to the Turks in the higher status using a negative yes/no question as a confirmation device without making it a face-threatening act and providing a chance to them to rethink the plan or the proposal and realize the weak points themselves. This point corroborates the findings about lower status Turks correcting the higher status one using negative yes/no questions (Dogançay-Aktuna and Kamışlı 1996). Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's analysis (1983) also show that the use of negative yes/no question serves for two purposes: seeking agreement without imposing anything on the listener and expressing surprise for getting information which is unexpected. These can serve as politeness devices in carrying out face threatening speech acts as shown below.

"Efendim, bence bu planda şu aksaklıklar/eksiklikler var. Bu eksiklikler başarıyı önleyebilir. Biraz daha üzerinde inceleme yapmak daha yerinde olabilir aslında değil mi?/Sir, X and Y are missing. These can lead to failure. Don't you think it would be better to work on those points?"

"Olabilir. Ama şurayı-şurayı bu şekilde değiştirsek, daha iyi olmaz mı? / Possible, but don't you think it would be better if we change X and Y?"

"Bilemiyorum efendim. Bir kere daha düşünsek?/I don't know, sir. What if we think again?"

One politeness device which was employed in very few instance both by the higher and lower status Turks was mitigating devices. Mitigating devices were used to lessen the intensity of the disagreement. The higher status person said: *"Plan ve düşüncelerin başka bir bölüm için geçerli olabilir ama sekreterlik görevleri için pek yararlı sayılmaz. /Your proposal and ideas might be applicable in another department, but they are not quite good for ours."* The lower status also used: *"Efendim, görüşlerinizde haklı olabilirsiniz ancak benim konu üzerindeki düşüncelerim biraz daha farklı. /Sir, you may be right, but my opinion is a bit different from yours."*

Address terms as a sign of respect and politeness were used frequently in the Turkish data. It is our belief that address terms need to be viewed as part of politeness formula, especially when analyzing data from cultures where seniority is culturally important. The extensive literature on personal address usage is an indicator of their significance for many cultures. Address terms are of primary importance as sociolinguistic variables because they are systematic, variable and a social phenomenon (Philipsen and Huspek 1985). Also, they are a "very salient indicator of status relationship" (Wolfson 1989:79). The analysis of the responses in terms of address terms showed that the lower status person used adress terms more frequently. This was also true for Turks while correcting each other in status unequal situations. In other words, while corecting a professor students used respectful address terms more frequently as opposed to professor correcting a

student (Doğançay-Aktuna and Kamışlı 1996). Both studies' findings show that address terms are used as an indicator deference or closeness in terms of social and psychological distance.

In higher to lower situation, there was only one instance when the address term was used (*"Mehmet Bey, bu öneri iyi, fakat yarın inceleyelim./This proposal is good, but let's examine it tomorrow Mr. Mehmet"*). In 13 instances, on the other hand, the lower status person used address terms while disagreeing with the higher status person. However, the range of address terms was very limited. In 11 instances *"Efendim / Sir/Madam"* and only in two instances *"Sevgili .../ Dear ..."* and *"... Bey / Mr. X"* were used. The use of *"efendim"* is very revealing because it shows a clear distance or status difference in the Turkish culture. The etymology of *"efendim"* is *"efendi"* which was used as an indicator of status in the Ottoman period and is now a form of address to show respect and status difference. Furthermore, the adress terms were located most frequently at the beginning of subejcts' responses. It seeemed as though they were setting the scene for or softening the impact of the coming disagreement or disapproval. *"Efendim, bence bu planda uygun olmayan şeyler var./ Sir/Madam, there are points in the plan that are not appropriate."* *"Efendim, ben o kadar emin değilim./Sir/Madam, I am not that sure."* No address terms were found in the American data.

Our findings showed that Americans used politeness markers more frequently than Turks, regardless of status. The most frequently used marker was positive preface preceding the disagreement strategy (H: 71% vs. L: 57%). For example, *"I like your suggestions, but in my experience, X, Y and Z have been problems. Have you considred how the new plan addresses these issues?"* and *"Your plan has merits, but I think the following aspect limit its effectiveness."*

Cross-cultural comparison showed that although Turks use positive prefaces as well, albeit less often than Americans, the tone of the Turkish prefaces in disagreeing with the higher status were not limited to what Takahashi and Beebe called as 'lukewarm' prefaces. The Turkish subjects showed variation: some were

very exaggereated (*"Harika fakat .../Wonderful, but ..."*) or (*"Efendim bu çok güzel ama .../Sir your plan is very good, but..."*); some were moderate (*"Senin planın da iyi ama .../Your plan is also good, but ..."*) or (*"Evet iyi bir plan ama .../Yes, it's a good plan, but ..."*) and one was very weak (*"Mümkün ama .../Possible, but ..."*). However, the moderate one was applied more. The fact that 20% of the Turkish subjects' responded *"yes"* to the boss' question of asking their opinions' about the plan whereas only 5% disagreed with the boss by saying *"no"* indicate that the lower status person is eager to soften their disagreements to make them less face threatening.

Status difference was also clear in the use of the softeners by the Americans. The higher status person softened his or her disapproval of the plan more than the lower status person (36% vs. 21%). The higher status person said: *"I think there might be some problems"* and *"There are a couple of things that might make it difficult to work."*

The status difference in the use of politeness markers became clear with respect to questioning and mitigating devices. Only the lower status person used the questioning strategy (14%) (*"Do you think we could talk about your ideas?"*) while it was not employed by the higher status people. Mitigating devices were more favoured by the lower status Americans than the higher status (21% vs. 7%). Higher status Americans said: (*"Let's examine <u>some</u> of the potential problems."*) while lower status ones said: *"I have <u>some</u> misgivings about it. Could I mention them?"*)

Status as a social variable had an important impact in the way the Americans disagreed with their status unequals. The higher status Americans softened their disapproval by using more positive preface and softeners while the lower status American pointed out their disapproval of the plan with a wider range of politeness markers. In other words, the higher status people were more careful about saving the lower status interlocutor's face. This is perhaps due to the nature of the social dynamics at workplace. The higher status Americans are more open to suggestions

and have the right to object to any proposals that they think will not work, yet they think that their objections or disapprovals should not be that strong to discourage the other party. The lower status Americans, on the other hand, prefered to employ a variety of politeness markers rather than just using positive preface and softeners extensively as the higher status. The lower status American (21%) used the mitigating devices as often as the softeners. Furthermore, they used questioning strategy twice more than the higher status American.

The comparison of the Turkish and American data points out to interesting differences between the two cultures. The Americans, both higher and lower status ones, employed politeness strategies more than the higher and lower status Turks. The combined frequency of the politeness formulas in the American data was 248% whereas in the Turkish data it was 142%. Furthermore, while they used a softening device. On the other hand, 30% of Turks in the higher status and 20% of the lower status Turks did not use politeness and made an explicit criticism of the plan or the proposal.

Status difference in the Turkish data was not clear with respect to politeness markers contrary to findings in the American data. As in the case with the semantic and syntactic formulas, the status difference in the Americans was more prominent. The higher status Americans used certain politenes markers (i.e., positive preface, softeners) distinctly more than the lower status ones. However, this was not the case with the Turks. There was not so much difference in the use of the politeness markers. In sum, the Americans proved to be more conscious of the status differences at the workplace than the Turks.

Conclusion and implications

In this study we examined the use of disagreement formulas by native speakers of Turkish to status unequals. We have revealed the semantic and syntactic forms they chose and showed how style shifting occurred on the basis of the role relationships and the status of the interlocutor. We looked at the politeness

strategies Turks employed to soften the inherently face-threatening speech act of disagreement. Then these were compared and contrasted with the sociolinguistic behavior of Americans who faced the same situation.

The study disclosed interesting findings about the linguistic and sociolinguistic behavior of the native speakers of Turkish. The Turkish subjects had a wide repertoire of semantic and syntactic formulas. Only the lower status person's disagreeing strategies included some additional strategies (e.g., agreeing and refraining from stating an opinion). Disagreement was seen inherent in the workplace. However, the way each status dealt with disagreement varied. The lower status people preferred to use the less challenging and therefore, less face threatening strategy of questioning while the higher status persons sometimes preferred to put off their direct disagreements.

The study revealed some similarities, but mostly differences in the sociolinguistic behavior of native speakers of Turkish and the American native speakers of English as a result of difference in culture. There was little variation in the use of disageement formulas in the Turkish data irrespective of status. One exception was token agreements to the proposal of the higher status Turks by the lower status ones. Turks, both in the role of the higher status and the lower status were more direct and blunt than the Americans in the case of disagreement, showing that the American culture is more concerned with face-saving of self and the other; perhaps as a result of more concern with individual rights. The major difference stood out in the use of the politeness strategies. Status differences in the use of both disagreement formulas and politeness markers were more obervable in the American data. To soften their disagreement with the status unequals Americans used more politeless strategies. Instead of overtly disagreeing with their status unequals they redressed it with more positive prefaces and softeners.

Our cross-cultural comparison of speech behavior by native speakers of Turkish and native speakers of American English show that although the same semantic formulas for displaying disagreement and expressing politeness in

interactions with unequal status interlocutors are valid for the two cultures, their frequencies of preferance are different. In other words, though the same formulas are available to members of both cultures, they are applied at different rates. This again indicates that the norms of appropriate behavior show variation across cultures.

Status, as a social variable influencing language use, was also found to carry different weights in the two cultures compared. It appears that status differences between interlocutors are more important for the Americans whose sociolinguistic behavior show greater changes in accordance with their perceived status levels. Hence, the impact of social power as a variable shaping our linguistic behavior was found to be greater on Americans than it was on Turks. This is a noteworthy finding in that in general variables such as status, age, setting, gender etc., are taken to have similar impacts across social contexts. Yet our findings indicate cross-cultural variation, at least for the two groups studied here. This finding calls for further investigation to show how, where and why social status (and indeed, other social variables) would have different impacts on language use across cultures.

So far as the use of politeness is concerned, our data showed that Americans in general were more concerned about saving the hearer's face in face-threatening speeh events. All Americans, regardless of their relative status, used politeness markers in their disagreements. Yet, an average of one fourth of Turks did not feel the need to do so. Positive prefaces were 'distinctly American' in speech use as they formed the most frequent politeness marker in the language use of both higher and lower status Americans. As in the case of status differences as a social variant, politeness markers and their extent of use showed cross-cultural variation. We believe that the above findings point out important cross-cultural differences in language use and about factors influencing it. The sociopsychological and cultural reasons for such findings merit further investigation before making generalizations. Suffice it to say that sociolinguistic relativity is an important factor in cross-cultural communication and understanding.

The results of other cross-cultural studies (e.g., Beebe &Takahashi 1989 a, b; Takahashi &Beebe 1993) find support in this study by defeating popular stereotypes. This study questions the belief that the Turkish society is patriarchial one and that seniority overrules as a social variable (cf. Güvenç 1995). Nevertheless, the data needs to be interpreted in its sociocultural context i.e., our findings are limited to the speech act of disagreement in the workplace. Context as a social variable in relation to social power or status has an impact in the execution of a speech act in terms of semantic and syntactic formulas and politeness markers. In another speech act, correction in the classroom, Turks were found to exhibit different social behavior that was more related to the status and power differences of interlocutors (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kamışlı, 1996). Thus, the social contect need to be taken into account when interpreting the findings.

Findings about native speakers of Turkish are invaluable to people who study Turkish as a Foreign language for international transactions or business. These findings show them the approapriately in different status levels in the workplace. At least it gives them a framework for making more valid interpretations of business encounters with Turks. Knowledge of socioculturally desirable norms of interaction in the work place can provide such learners with ample opportunities to be successful in their job and to feel a part of the team or group. It will, in other words, keep them from being alineated or isolated from colleagues in the workplace.

Our findings on sociolinguistic behavior of native speakers of Turkish as opposed to native speakers of American English provide insights to people who are involved in preparing textbooks and designing classroom materials or activities for ESL/EFL learners. They are also particularly important for Turkish teachers of EFL who need to point out the differences in the cultural norms, thereby raising the language awareness of their Turkish EFL students who most probably will be interacting with the Americans or other speakers of English in social settings where diverse cultural norms will be at play.

In making cross-cultural comparisons of various speech acts it is essential to bear in mind the limitations of such studies. Various researchers have already pointed out the pitfalls in the cross-cultural study of speech acts. Wolfson, Marmor, and Jones (1989) question the assumption that the same speech act carries the same meaning and social connotations across all cultures, hence referring to the same social act and Blum-Kulka (1983) add that they cannot be translated across language based on their literal meanings.

Taking various speech acts from English (e.g., giving advice, requesting) and syntactic devices (e.g., tags and exclamation), Wierzbicka (1985) shows how English utterances cannot be translated literally to Polish having the same pragmatic impact. Wierzbicka also points out how cultural norms manifested in speech acts show changes not only from one culture to another, but also from one regional and social variety to another. Indeed, our findings support the above assertions such that the same speech event can trigger different behavior from different cultures. These issues should be considered in future research. Notwithstanding these points, however, for bettering interaction across cultures we need to attempt such studies. Moreover, our findings point out that we also need to question the relative impacts of social variables such as social status on language use in different domains and cultures.

In interpreting the results of speech act studies we also need to consider the methodology used. Various studies on cross-cultural comparisons of speech acts have used written questionnaires in the form of DCTs. As a starter, DCTs give important clues. One of the advantages is that it provides vast amounts of data in a very short period of time. Also, it provides control over certain variables. Yet DCTs do not elicit spoken discourse or trigger such spoken discourse variables as hesitations, pauses or fillers; although they do reveal the norms of speaking and cultural values of the group under examination. To Beebe (1985, 1989b), their advantages outweigh their disadvantages.

This research focused on the speech acts and their use by true representatives of young educated Turkish people from all parts of Turkey. The findings of the study should thus be interpreted in relation only to young educated Turkish people. It would be interesting to replicate this study taking an older group of educated professional Turkish male and females as subjects and make a comparison across age groups. The findings of such studies can reveal the potential and upcoming changes in the social dynamics of Turkish society. It seems a good idea to support DCTs with natural observations as we did in this research. Our data from observations of disagreements at settings other than workplace showed very similar results to DCT findings, thus cross-validating our results.

In conclusion, we believe that research like the one reported above is needed to reveal the cross-culturally different use of speech acts, taking into consideration not just a few languages, but many more from different parts of the world. Only then can we start discussing true pragmatics and sociolinguistics and then help applied linguists and intercultural communication in a world that is rapidly coming into closer contact and feeling the need for better understanding.

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